Editorial

With this issue, my 3-year term (1998–2000) as VOLUNTAS editor is complete. The experience has been both demanding and rewarding, particularly in the sense that I have learned a tremendous amount about the third-sector world and believe that the journal's readership cannot fail to have done so too. The more one finds out about the hydra-like attributes of the third-sector world, the more one realizes how little is known, and the sheer depth and variety that remains to be uncovered. I sense that despite the important advances made in recent years, many of which have been reflected in the pages of this journal, the field is only just beginning to take shape. That said, I will take the opportunity of my outgoing editorial to briefly point to three of the most important benefits for readers which I have been very glad to facilitate, and to offer you some summary statistics that I believe are useful in revealing the truly international and interdisciplinary direction in which the journal has developed.

INTERNET AND INSTITUTIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The journal and its readers have benefited significantly from recent advances in communication technology. Many VOLUNTAS readers now make use of the journal on-line via the International Society of Third-Sector Research website (currently at http://www.jhu.edu/~istr/pubs/voluntas/). Over the past couple of years, it has been possible to use this to access material, not only back to the time when VOLUNTAS was partnered with ISTR (becoming its official journal in 1995), but also back to its pre-ISTR foundation year of 1990. Now included on the website are abstracts in English, French, German, and Spanish, as well as routine information for potential subscribers and submitters.

More recently, a further service has been made available via the publisher, Kluwer Academic/Plenum (see http://www.wkap.nl/journalhome.htm/0957-8765). In line with their general corporate strategy, it is now possible for institutional subscribers to download the contents of the journal instead of, or in addition to, receiving a hard copy. These category of subscribers are primarily academic libraries and research institutes, a group whose volume of subscriptions has continued its long-term growth, with an increase of about 22% since 1998. This is

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particularly heartening when we bear in mind the pressures on many libraries around the world to make economies and cut costs, as well as the proliferation of new journals, also competing for libraries' scarce resources.

VOLUNTAS SYMPOSIA

Voluntas symposia have been significant catalysts for scholarship. The symposia in London and Prague were among the highlights, for me, of my tenure as editor both as stimulating fora at the time for participants, but just as, or more importantly, contributing tangibly to the body of scholarship in our field through special issues. Issue 10:1 thematized "Third Sector Policy at the Crossroads," whereas issue 11:2 was devoted to "Ten Years After: The Third Sector and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe." I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Mott Foundation, the Indiana Centre for Philanthropy, Charities Aid Foundation, and the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR) for sponsoring these events, and thus ultimately making these special issues of the journal possible.

NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY

Considerable efforts have been made to reach out to non-English speakers. Since its foundation, of course, VOLUNTAS has included foreign language abstracts, but we have now successfully initiated an emphasis on foreign language submissions, which are refereed by speakers of the relevant language. This option has now been put to good use by French and Arabic submitters (with articles in the pipeline for publication in 2001), but I would like to stress here that we also have the capability, as yet unused, to handle Spanish and German submissions. For those papers which pass the first hurdle of home-language review, ISTR now provides a small budget to help with the costs of translation into English.

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE BIENNIAL ISTR CONFERENCE

The ISTR conference has become an important fixture on the calendars of the growing community of third-sector researchers. Participants were strongly encouraged to work on their papers prepared for the Geneva in 1998, and a significant number of these were published in the journal, after the usual rigorous double-blind VOLUNTAS refereeing procedure, in 1999 and 2000. A good number of the papers presented at the most recent ISTR conference, Dublin 2000, have likewise been submitted, and some are likely to come to fruition between these covers over the coming couple of years.

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ABSTRACTING AND INDEXING

In the increasingly competitive world of research, it is becoming ever more important for scholars not only to publish, but also to publish in journals recognized as adhering to recognized standards of academic excellence. Much of this recognition is built slowly and tortuously through informal reputation, but more formal institutional recognition is also important. In this regard, it is not insignificant that VOLUNTAS is now abstracted or indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, social services abstracts and sociological abstracts. I hope that my successors will be able to build on this to gain recognition from further constituencies. In many countries, there are very strong career incentives to publish in discipline-specific journals, so there is a continuing up-hill battle ahead to develop strongly as an interdisciplinary journal.

STATISTICS

It is revealing to conclude with some statistics. The fostering of diversity in terms of discipline, topic, and geography has been a particularly important part of VOLUNTAS' contribution to the development of the field of third-sector studies. Statistics can show what has been achieved thus for. The focus below is on discipline and geography, rather than field or topic, in the interests of brevity.

What has been published since 1998? Looking at the primary discipline of first-named authors (Fig. 1), we see that sociology, political science, and policy studies together account for approximately 50% of all published papers. In terms of countries studied, we see that the "problem" of what some observers refer to as an "Anglo-Saxon" bias is not as apparent as many seem to assume. Although we have consolidated existing strengths there, three-fifths of our papers have focused on contexts other than the UK or North America (Fig. 2).

The composition of submissions and reviewers is also of interest. Submissions show a more varied pattern than publications do, because the acceptance rates differ by discipline and region (Figs. 3 and 4). We certainly see a more diverse pattern, with a smaller percentage in the "big three" disciplines (sociology, political science, and policy studies), and lower concentration more generally: a lower proportion are accounted for by the top seven disciplines. Over 20 percent of submissions do not have a first-named author fitting into these categories—the "other" segment. Regionally, these figures also reflect a more varied picture and the inroads made with submissions, at least, for the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Africa. The Latin American situation is very disappointing given the extent to which scholarship has flourished in that part of the world in recent years, and it is to be hoped that the paucity of material from there can be rectified over the coming years. Finally, we come to the unsung heroes of the journal, in my opinion: its external reviewers. Their contribution is absolutely crucial, and we can see the extent to

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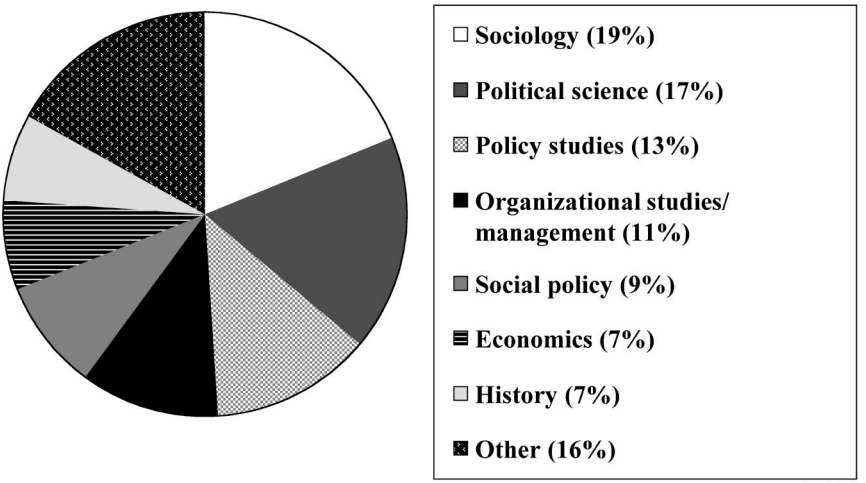


Fig. 1. VOLUNTAS published papers 1998–2000: Disciplinary mix.

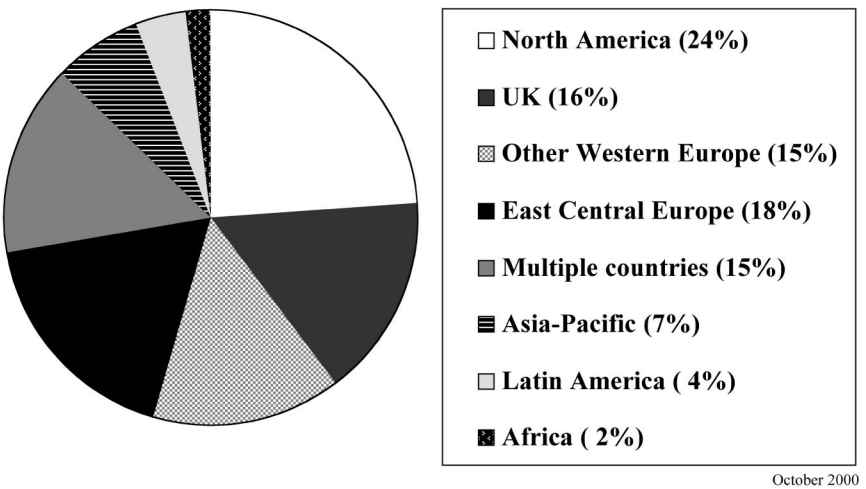


Fig. 2. VOLUNTAS published papers 1998–2000: Published papers by country studied.

which scholarship mediated by the journal has truly benefited from the expertise of researchers from all corners of the globe, although it still inevitably does reflect the concentration of research resources, and hence expertise, in the North (Figs. 5 and 6).

I draw this editorial to a close with acknowledgments. I am indebted to a number of key people, without whom the journal would not have been able to

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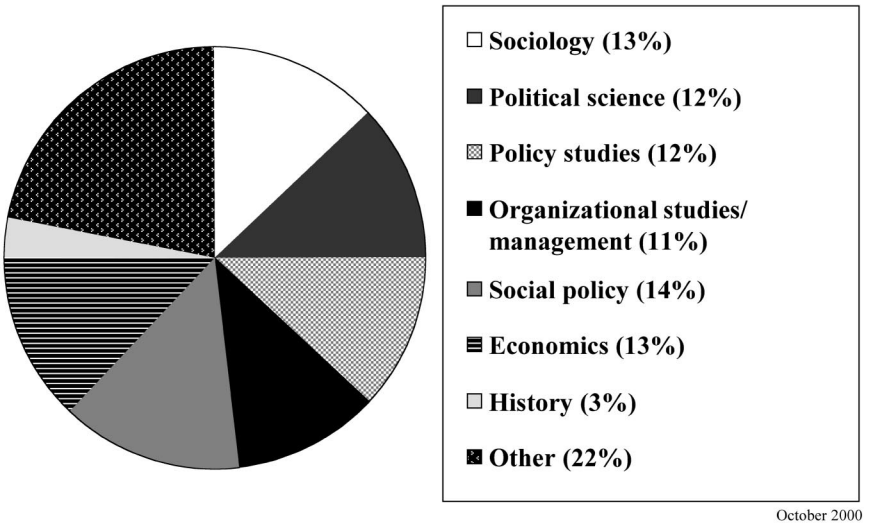


Fig. 3. VOLUNTAS 1998–2000: Submitters by discipline.

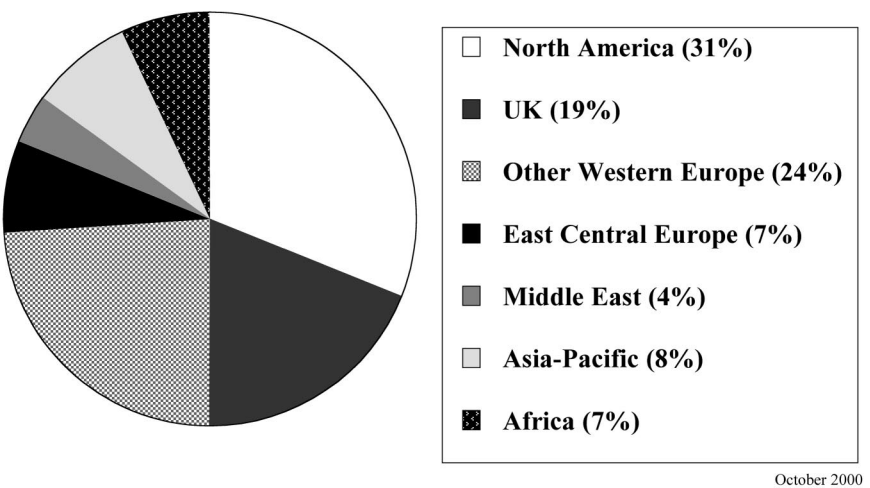


Fig. 4. VOLUNTAS 1998–2000: Submitters by region.

grow—in terms of subscriptions, but I hope also to mature in a more qualitative sense too. First and foremost, those who have submitted to, published in, and referred for, the journal. Second, I would like to thank Jane Dennett, Marit Haug, Sarah Lister, Rachel Gopal, and Lisa Carlson who, at various points in my 3-year term, have provided dedicated support as editorial assistants. Third, thanks

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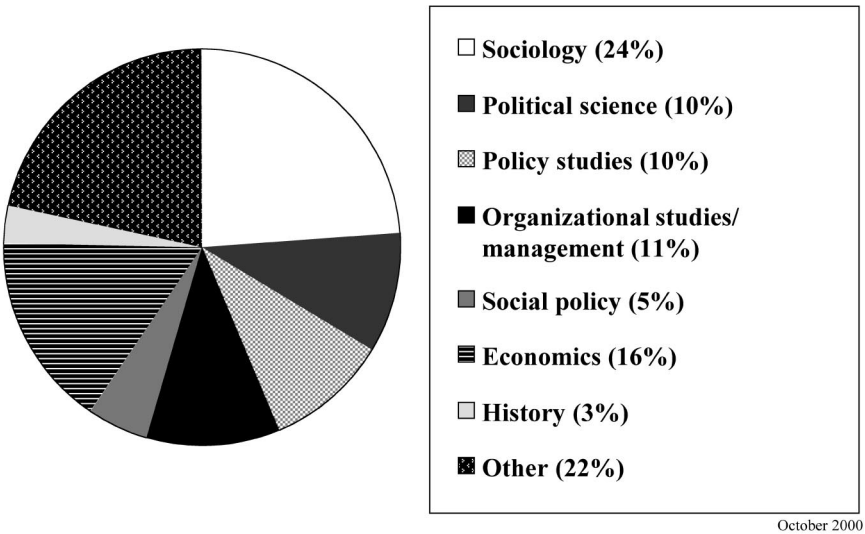


Fig. 5. VOLUNTAS 1998–2000: Reviewers by discipline.

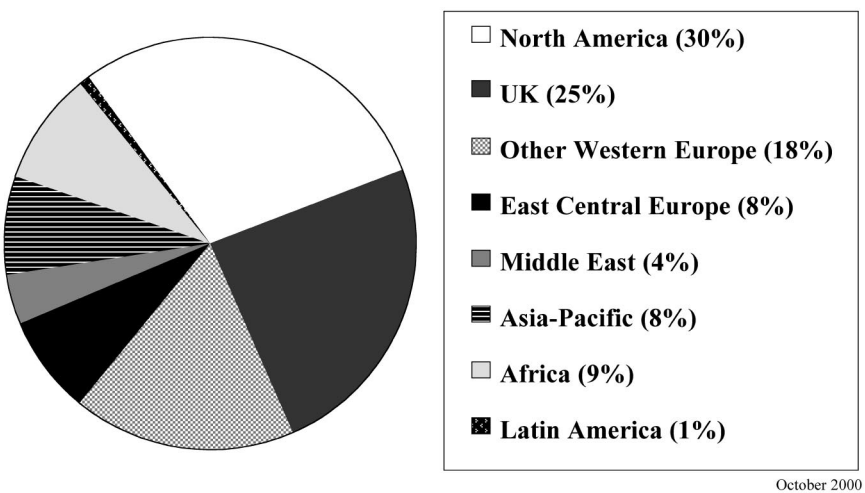


Fig. 6. VOLUNTAS 1998–2000: Reviewers by region.

are due to Margie Daniels for acting as liaison with ISTR. Fourth, the support and advice of VOLUNTAS' senior editorial board (Edith Archambault, Helmut Anheier, Annette Zimmer, Avner Ben-Ner, and Mark Lyons) has been particularly important to me, and so I owe them a debt of gratitude. The editorial board at large has also been a much valued resource.

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It only remains to me to pass the reins to Rupert Taylor and wish him every success! Rupert was appointed as my successor by the ISTR Board at the Dublin Biennial conference. All VOLUNTAS correspondence from January 2001 should be directed to Rupert at the address shown on the inside back cover.

Jeremy Kendall
Outgoing Editor

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